

2023-24

Chagrin VALLEY MAGAZINE



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Contents

We are thrilled to welcome and thank you for taking time to read our Chagrin Valley Magazine. This publication is proudly offered through a partnership between the Chagrin Valley Chamber of Commerce, The Chagrin Valley Times and Chagrin Valley businesses. This valuable tool assists us in achieving our chamber's mission to promote and enhance a strong business, community and economic environment in the Chagrin Valley. We hope you will find it as helpful and entertaining as we intend it to be.

The Chagrin Valley Chamber of Commerce boasts over 550 members and is available to members and visitors alike to help make the most of your time spent here. Our members care a great deal for this community and we are sure you will find this to be true during your visit.

Whether you are spending an afternoon, planning a weekend, are new to town or a lifelong resident, the Chagrin Valley has something for you to experience. For information on upcoming events or for inquiries about how to join our chamber, please feel free to stop by the Chamber office located in the historical Town Hall at 83 N. Main Street in Chagrin Falls or check our web site at cvcc.org.



*Sincerely,
Michael Henry,
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6

In Step With Horses



11

Inn of Chagrin



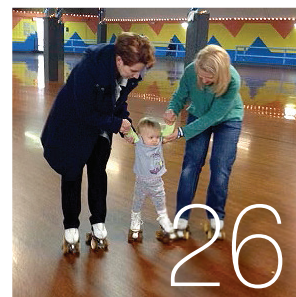
14

Farmers market



16

The Sleepy Rooster



26

Roller Rink



28

The Pond



30

Glass Asylum



32

Arra's Hair Salon



two&company two foundation



➤ Shari Hunter was inspired by her son, Derek, to start Two Foundation in 2013 as a 501 C (3) non-profit organization. Two café and boutique opened in 2015. Our mission is to provide opportunities for people of every ability to connect, work, grow, and thrive.

➤ Two Foundation provides job opportunities for individuals with cognitive exceptionalities that have experienced barriers to community employment, to develop great workplace habits and skills within our café and boutique.

➤ Two partners with local schools, DODD & OOD on job readiness training, job development, job placement, and follow along support. Two also provides summer job readiness camps.

➤ The results include each person developing a sense of confidence and self-respect, and an appropriate job. This impacts every aspect of their lives, which then forces positive change within our communities. Two has 83 business partners with a heart to participate in our integrated model. We are always looking to expand our list of partners!

➤ Our new name - Two & Company - is a network of people, places and experiences that enable people of every ability to find happiness and success in the workplace and beyond. This encompasses our cafe, shops, services and foundation.

➤ The Café is a farm-to-fork restaurant and coffee shop – sourced locally, healthy options, fresh bakery, all made from scratch.

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➤ We have outgrown our current leased space and purchased a building in Chagrin Falls and are running a capital campaign to raise \$4 million dollars to cover the purchase and renovations. We need the help of our community to get there. Please visit our Bainbridge café and boutique and consider a donation. www.twoandcompany.org

➤ Two is hosting a fundraiser for our capital campaign at our new property (177 E. Washington Street) over Blossom Time weekend. We will have daily parking spots available for a \$25 donation and a limited number of weekend packages for \$500, which includes parking for one vehicle on Thursday – Sunday, plus up to 8 parade seats in front of our building, plus a Two goodie bag. To pre-register, please call the Two at (440)384-3236 and ask for Lisa or Christian.

Please see pictures of how we plan to restore our new building to its historical front:



CC/11/23



Jon Gurry, a veteran who suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, spends time grooming “Doc” as part of his participation at In Step With Horses.

Equine partners

In Step With Horses provides a safe haven

By SUE REID

Sunshine spills into a stall at In Step With Horses on a crisp winter morning as Iraqi war veteran Jon Gurry gently brushes the coat of Doc, methodical in his movements and purposeful in his approach.

“Thatta boy,” Mr. Gurry, 69, said softly.

The two have been working together and bonding over the past six years, with Mr. Gurry not having to say much during those interactions, something he values deeply.

“The greatest gift they are giving me here

is a connection with somebody else I don’t have to talk to,” said Mr. Gurry, a resident of Willoughby who suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. “I love cleaning horses.”

“In the military, they have a concept called ‘preventive maintenance,’” Mr. Gurry continued. “You fix your equipment, you fix your truck and you fix your weapons. Here, I’m grooming horses, and that satisfies a need in a military guy.”

“Whichever one is the dirtiest, I love to clean,” he says.

Mr. Gurry is among the hundreds of individuals who benefit from their participation with horses at In Step With Horses, a non-profit organization which provides a safe haven to balance mental health through a connection with animals and nature.

In existence since 2017 and formerly located in Bainbridge Township, In Step has been at home since 2022 on a six-and-a-half acre farm in Chester Township.

“Horses have been intricately linked to human survival for centuries,” Melissa Houserman, executive director and president, said, noting that people innately gravitate to them, unlike other animals.

“They are extremely accepting and know how to live in the moment,” Ms. Houserman, a Russell Township resident, said.

Fostering that connection is at the core of In Step With Horses, which provides services to all ages, beginning with 6-year-olds, through a wide variety of programming and personalized sessions.

Continued on page 8



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Continued from page 6

"All four of us are deeply horse people," Ms. Houserman said of the founders of In Step. "We've owned horses, ridden horses and competed."

They are also grounded personally in horses, having seen first-hand their therapeutic benefits.

"My father was a World War II veteran, and for me, it resonated personally supporting veterans with PTSD and unresolved trauma," Ms. Houserman said.

She worked alongside In Step Clinical Director Chris Goodall, who also had personal experience, seeing in the 1990s and early 2000s the success of this kind of work, combining mental health treatment and horses.

"Horses accept you today as that partner, unlike any other human," Ms. Goodall, of Russell Township, said.

While their size may be intimidating, horses have the unique gift to connect with people and other animals too, she continued, which makes them good therapeutic partners giving unconditional acceptance.

"Dogs are subservient and want a master, but a horse wants to be your partner," Ms. Goodall said, "closer than any other animal I've experienced."

"They replicate the human connection if we allow it to happen," she said.



Chris Goodall and Melissa Houserman, two of the founders of In Step With Horses, foster a connection between the animals and the clients they serve.

At In Step, in a quiet, relaxing space, individuals with a variety of needs are afforded the ideal environment to connect without interruption.

"People who cannot connect to others can find the connection (here)," Ms. Goodall noted.

Research supports this kind of interaction and its benefits.

"When you are in the presence of a horse, your heart rates match up," Ms. Goodall said, "and your energy will be at the same level."

Those entering the barn at In Step carrying stress begin to learn skills to regulate that,

with the horse meeting them at their levels.

"It's a non-judgmental biofeedback loop," Ms. Houserman added.

Last year, In Step With Horses served over 230 individuals, including primarily first responders, veterans, youth and adults.

"We will serve anybody who feels their emotional state will be helped by being with horses," Ms. Goodall said.

This includes individuals with a history of trauma, or children with attention issues and

Continued on page 10



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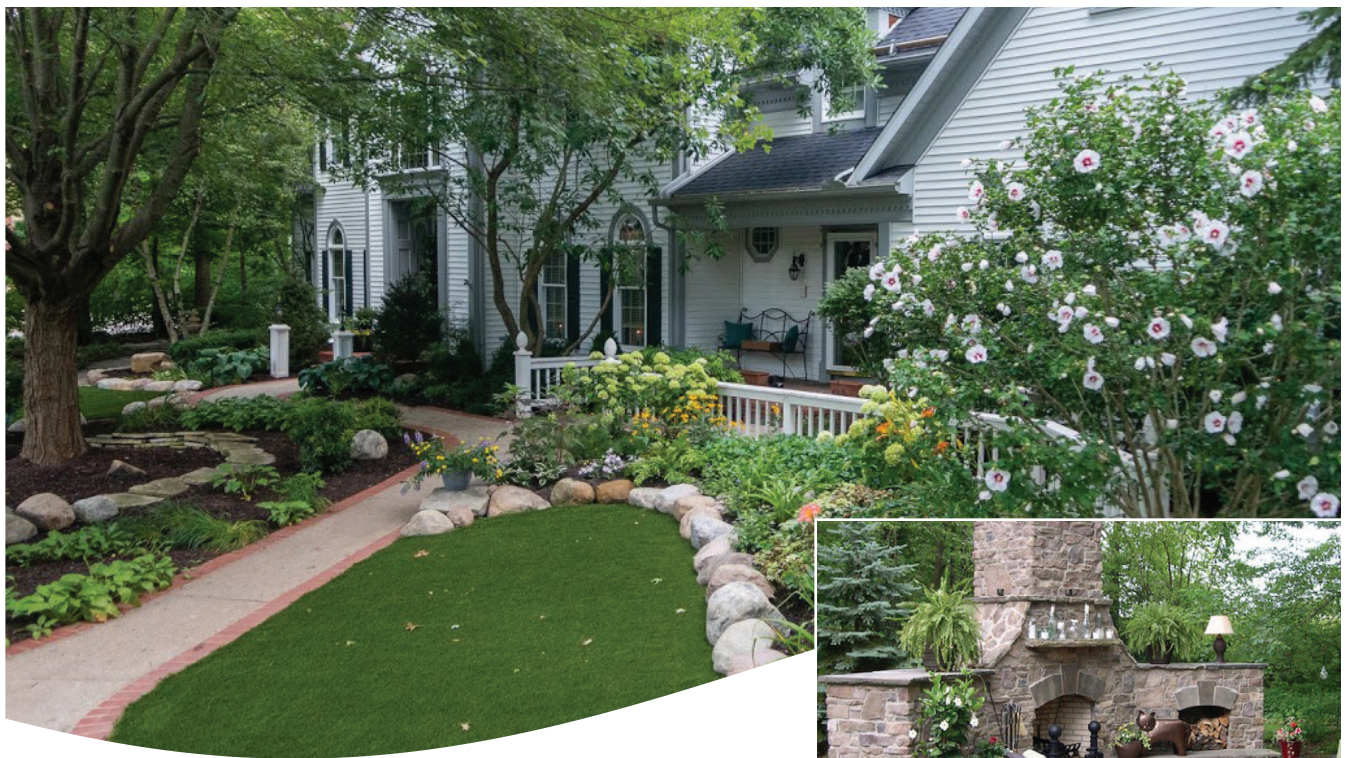


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Continued from page 8

anxiety, among other conditions.

With about a dozen quarter horses that call the farm home, In Step offers three main services, including individual psychotherapy with a licensed therapist; riding lessons which are mental-health goal-oriented in nature staffed by certified therapeutic riding instructors; and equine-assisted learning.

Participants benefit from being taught not only horsemanship skills, but life skills. They are often found talking to horses, hugging them, crying alongside them or just standing silently in their presence.

"People say, 'you saved my life,'" Ms. Houserman said of their interactions with the horses. "Many are really at the cusp of significant harm (to themselves.)"

"Having that connection to the animals, to the team and to an environment in which they feel safe, seen and accepted can be life-changing at minimum or life saving on the other end," she said.

Participants at In Step even include mothers who have come to recognize they need time for self-care, Ms. Goodall explained.

"Coming out here to the barn is their time to decompress," she said. It also teaches how to better manage anxiety at home.

The horses have the innate ability to read

body language, the founders say, and, depending on the goal for the client, there is talking or no talking at all.

Other options include activities such as leading an obstacle course, with In Step giving participants flexibility to decide their paths.

"Sometimes it's just watching the horses in the outdoor setting and talking about it that helps them," Ms. Houserman said. "Or even just petting them."

All of the programming is done in a quiet, relaxed setting, a purposeful environment that the founders sought to create.

"Everyone is welcome here," Ms. Goodall said. "Sometimes people feel intimidated to sit with a therapist and blab, but here, they don't have to make eye contact."

"Stroking a horse calms you down, especially people with trauma, and moving around tends to loosen people up to be able to talk," she said.

In Step, which is staffed by independently licensed mental health professionals, social workers and counselors, as well as certified therapeutic riding instructors, barn care staff and equine specialists, is funded by private donations and grants, with fees administered on a sliding scale.

With a focus on mental health and emotional wellness, In Step treats clients with a wide

range of conditions, from mild autism and depression to anxiety and trauma response.

All therapists on staff have their own individual specialties.

In Step is unique in that it is well-structured with a plan in mind and a vision that is executed, as opposed to a mom-and-pop operation or a huge factory, Ms. Goodall explained.

"We are leading the industry in that way," she said.

"Our goal is to create an organization which is a model for other centers around the country – and sustainable," Ms. Houserman said, "and one which is totally mental-health based."

Most important, the women said they are achieving their goals alongside horses, and in tandem, not one working for the other.

"We are not using horses," Ms. Goodall noted. "We are working with them."

Both Ms. Houserman and Ms. Goodall said being able to connect and service people with these magnificent animals is filling a purpose – and a dream job.

"The horses are our partners and extension beings, and we are learning how to have a relationship with them," Ms. Goodall said.

While they may not speak, they have behaviors and responses that are dynamic, she added.

"They have things to say to all of us if we are willing to listen." ■

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CM22



One of 15, quaint guest rooms at the Inn of Chagrin feature antiques mixed with newer decor, white linens and custom artwork and design.

Photograph by Sarah Kerens

At home

Historic Inn of Chagrin offers quaint lodging in the heart of the Village

By SUE REID

With roots that date back to 1927, the Inn of Chagrin – tucked in the quaint south-west corner of West Orange and West streets – has always been a special place.

“The place has held prestige through the years,” Chagrin Falls Historical Society President John Bourisseau said, while pouring over vintage photographs.

Visited by the likes of such notables as Charles Lindbergh, who attended a reception in his honor and spent the night, and John D. Rockefeller, who had his own table, as did his sons, “it was a place where people of importance came,” Mr. Bourisseau continued.

In fact, the Inn’s story is as colorful as the guests who have frequented it through the decades and the custom artwork that now adorns each of the 15 guest room walls.

Its beginnings are linked to what was once

the famous restaurant Crane’s Canary Cottage, opened by Clarence Arthur Crane, better known as C.A. He purchased the property, which once contained two small houses, in 1927, removing one house and building an addition on the other. He later bought a third house, which was the former Gamekeeper’s Tavern and now Jo Jo’s Bar, and joined them to form the building that exists today.

It is that connection to bars and restaurants along West Street that makes the Inn of Chagrin that much more special and a “gem,” New York City designer Christian Siriano, who designed the 15 guest rooms last year, said after visiting the village.

“I thought it was so special and unique,” Mr. Siriano said of first impressions of the Inn. “It was nestled in this really cute little space. I love that it is connected to other things.”

What started out as a restaurant, then a business with small shops, became the home

of the Artificial Plant Co., which moved there in 1966, and The Basic Place housewares shop.

The south side of the building was home to a restaurant called 87 W Courtyard Dining, which in 1978 became Gamekeeper’s Tavern.

The building opened as an Inn in 1991.

It did so with fanfare, holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony with notable Chagrin residents, some of whom had worked at the Inn when it was Crane’s Canary Cottage, leading tours dressed in costumes.

Similar tours took place last spring, with new Inn of Chagrin owners welcoming the community with champagne tours throughout the newly redesigned space.

“Our goal was to modernize things like the bathrooms and update the amenities that people expect when they come to an Inn, while still preserving the integrity of the

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

Victorian look and feel,” explained Bret Adams, founder of the Monven Group and part-owner of the Inn of Chagrin.

His restaurant group approached the project with the ambition to reclaim whatever history was there from the Canary Cottage beginnings, he said.

“It’s really been an exciting blend,” Mr. Adams said.

In redesigning the rooms, many pieces from the old furniture from Chagrin’s legendary Brewster and Stroud store were kept. Some were reupholstered for a custom look along with many new pieces.

Mr. Siriano added that every room has a hint of a fashion element, whether it’s a book or sketch that he has done.

“Each room has its own shape and size,” said Molly Gebler, managing partner of the Inn of Chagrin, continued, and a character of its own. “We have guests who have literally made it a mission to stay in each room.”

“It is important for the village to have a place for people to stay that provides access to all of the things the village has to offer,” Mr. Bourisseau said.

“You get to eat, drink and be entertained, all while having a restful night in a beautiful room,” Ms. Gebler added of the amenities that both surround and are within the Inn.

“The fact that you have the best shops and restaurants all within walking distance, to me, is part of the experience of staying at the Inn,” Ms. Gebler said. “You can park your car and then never have to get back in it.”

It has been extremely important to her to upgrade the building and freshen it up, and



New York designer Christian Siriano’s relationship with the Inn of Chagrin will continue into the future. His designs, which include a hint of fashion, are made clear in the rooms within the historic building.

Ms. Gebler believes that Mr. Siriano did just that, taking the input and keeping the character and charm, whether it be the poster beds throughout or the beautifully designed coffee

tables within the rooms. Linens from Paris round out the elegant touches.

The Inn’s relationship with Mr. Siriano is continuing into the future, Ms. Gebler noted.

This spring, the Inn was named Business of the Year by the Chagrin Chamber of Commerce.

It continues to draw guests from near and far.

Advance notice is necessary when booking rooms, Ms. Gebler noted.

Local and no-so-local guests are welcome, Ms. Gebler continued. The intent is to provide a place that is extremely home-like.

“If you really break it down, the Inn is the size of a nice big house, and the guests become family to us,” she said. “I think we go over and beyond to make sure they feel at home during their stay.”

Throughout village history, the Inn has been the only hotel in Chagrin Falls since the mid-19th century, when the Irving House dominated the corner of East Washington and Main streets.

Mr. Adams said the entire project of acquiring the Inn has been a “labor of love.”

“We think between the updating of the rooms and other activities in the village, it will continue to create the destination. This is such a special place.” ■



Bathrooms within the Inn of Chagrin display clean lines and a crisp, classic custom design.

Photographs by Tim Lenz

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Local farmers markets fill demand for home-grown

By ANASTASIA NICHOLAS

Families want to know where their food is grown – the closer to home, the better.

Family-owned and family-run farmers markets in downtown Chagrin Falls and surrounding communities are embracing trends of sustainable shopping and the farm-to-table movement.

Sirna's Farm in Auburn is a family-run operation that sells goods at farmers markets around the region as well as at their farm, which has been thriving on Ravenna Road since 1997.

It is a diversified farm with a little bit of everything, including heirloom tomatoes, 20 varieties of peppers, goji berries, strawberries, pumpkins, and more.

The farm has been open for more than 25 years. Since the pandemic began, manager Kaitlyn Sirna has seen customers paying more attention to their food from health, safety, and comfort standpoints.

"It's easier to go to your local farmstand and get things, and there's a lot to offer in terms of product and food in Northeast Ohio," said Ms. Sirna, the family's youngest daughter.

She added that the pandemic's disruption of the food supply chain highlighted the need for a local food system.

"We feel like we exist to support the community, so we focus on local not only in terms of how we engage in the community, but in terms of where we focus our efforts," Ms. Sirna said. "There are plenty of ways for us to support other farmers and for us all to coexist in the community together."

The family farm also supports their farm-to-table restaurant, Sirna's Pizza, located two miles up the street. Many products picked go straight to the restaurant.

"We're constantly driving back and forth bringing ingredients back," owner Craig Sirna said, adding that that contributes to freshness that customers appreciate.

Heirloom tomatoes are the farm's top product, Mr. Sirna said. His daughter, Kristen, harvests them daily.

"Everybody waits for those," he said.

The family has been farming so long that they have learned interesting tricks, such as crossbreeding tomatoes and peppers.

"We have ones we know grow really well



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and taste really good,” Ms. Sirna said. “We’re always trying new things.”

Harvest Bell Farm in Newbury is another family operation which opened its farm store in spring 2021, due to not only the pandemic but the community’s need to find local products, owner Tiffany Mushrush Mentzer said.

She also works as market manager at Geauga Fresh Farmers Market.

Open since 2014, Harvest Bell recently began raising more turkeys, chickens, and hogs to keep up with demand. The small vegetable farm consists mainly of flowers, winter and summer squash, beans, and herbs, Mrs. Mentzer said.

The farm also has a very small apple orchard with about seven trees.

“Our customers have wanted to know where their food is coming from,” Mrs. Mentzer said. Though the concern was there before, she said, “because of COVID, we had that increase (of people wanting to know). Our vendors have seen an increase in traffic and sales since COVID.”

Their farm store sells homemade maple syrup along with meats, cheeses, jellies, snacks, pickles, relishes, and candy. They have a greenhouse full of annuals, hanging baskets, and combination pots.

Gauga Fresh Farmers Market in South Russell is open from May to October, showcasing almost 50 area vendors, including Chickabuzz Honey, Elderberry Marsh, Maple Crest Farm, and Sandee River Farms. The biweekly winter market runs from November to late March.

Strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, and corn are popular, as are flowers, which are highly sought-after in the summer. Shoppers may also choose from varieties of eggs and meat, including beef, hog, chicken, turkey, rabbit, quail, goat, and lamb.

Mrs. Mentzer said the market has seen an uptick not only in customers, but in vendors, who started with an interest in growing their own food and wound up with products to sell.

She expects the participation and interest surrounding the market will continue.

At Howard’s Apples Farm in Bainbridge, which is open from May to December, visitors come for the apples, but will be pleased with other attractions and offerings including apple cider slushies, pick-your-own blueberries, and even a 1952 Allan Herschell Little Dipper.

“Not everybody has one,” said Pam Krotzer, who co-owns the farm with her fiancé, Paul Harris.

Depending on what is in season, the farm carries asparagus, strawberries, sweet corn, cucumbers, tomatoes, peaches, pumpkins, Christmas trees, and more.

“It’s not the same all the time,” Ms. Krotzer said.

The market’s Fall Fest comes alive every autumn. Weekends are packed with fun activities such as duck races, apple launching, pumpkin tic-tac-toe, and a corn maze. A unique arrange-



ment of pumpkin decorations is offered.

Miles Farmers Market has been feeding families in Solon for 52 years.

Its main products include fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, deli, and baked goods. Its raw meat offerings include signature burgers and sausages with different flavors created in-house. At the bistro, visitors may sit and enjoy fried chicken, ribs, and other hot foods, which are also available to go.

The market works with a wide variety of local farmers who bring in new products every day – bananas, apples, oranges, pears, peaches, plums, nectarines, and more. Most of the vegetables come from Amish farmers in Middlefield.

Manager Justin Golobek said what makes this family-run business unique is its personable, service-oriented atmosphere. The staff likes to experiment with different demos and sales, he added.

“We know a lot of our customers by name,” Mr. Golobek said. “We have a lot of knowledgeable staff that have been here a long time and are helpful with suggestions, knowing how to cook things, and pick them out.”

With a robust selection of farmers markets to choose from, the Chagrin Valley has plenty of options when it comes to locally-sourced, sustainable food. ■



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The Sleepy Rooster, located on Chillicothe Road in South Russell, has not had a slow day since it opened its doors in January 2021.

The Sleepy Rooster: A hit for brunch

By ANASTASIA NICHOLAS

Craig and Sarah Fitzgerald chose to pursue their passion by starting a restaurant in South Russell. The Sleepy Rooster opened its doors in January 2021 and has not had a slow day since.

The locally owned and operated restaurant serves its own take and unique twists on classic breakfast dishes along with creative lunch items such as grilled PB&J and a fried bologna sandwich with onions and mustard – all made from scratch using local ingredients.

The BLT sandwich substitutes bacon with crispy pork belly, and the eggs Benedict are dubbed “Craig’s Benedict.”

“We’re from Bainbridge – we don’t want to scare anybody away with crazy dishes,” Mr. Fitzgerald explained. “It’s got to be

comforting.”

Mrs. Fitzgerald said that the menu combines comfort items and dishes that guests will recognize.

The Fitzgeralds feed their entire staff at the end of every shift in what they call a family meal. They are trying to help better their lives and those of their families. For Christmas and spring break, they close for 11 days.

“Hopefully, it doesn’t tick anyone off,” Mr. Fitzgerald said. “We are a mom-and-pop. We have kids and we are doing this for a living, but we need to have a life as well. Business and life is a tough balance, but it’s working.”

They credit their amiable staff with welcoming guests and making them feel at home.

“They all get along so well,” Mr. Fitzgerald said. “We’re so lucky.”

Mrs. Fitzgerald describes herself as very opinionated, making her an effective critic when Mr. Fitzgerald, who was trained in classical French cooking at Le Cordon Bleu Institute of Culinary Arts in Pittsburgh, was putting together the menu and asked for her opinions while experimenting with food.

They use their friends’ – local farmers – products, including Mackenzie Creamery goat cheese, Jim Davis honey, Harvest Bell eggs, Haskins Farm maple syrup, and more.

They called the restaurant The Sleepy Rooster “because we’re not morning people,” Mrs. Fitzgerald said.

Hence, they do not open before 8 a.m. like restaurants they call “early breakfast places.”

A bonus is that by the time they close the restaurant at 2 p.m., their daughters, Lachlyn and Shea, are getting off the school bus.

Continued on page 18



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Continued from page 16

“We figured this was our best bet for taking care of our family,” Mr. Fitzgerald said. “I think that was the final push for Sarah.”

The couple decided to start working on their dream in late 2019. They had planned to open in June 2020, but the pandemic hit right after they signed the lease, and kept things interesting.

“It was not good timing,” Mrs. Fitzgerald said.

The couple worried their business would be shut down before it even opened. But they persisted. They feel fortunate about the restaurant’s success.

Prior to establishing the restaurant, Mr. Fitzgerald had worked in sales at Athens, Ohio-based Jackie O’s Brewery. While he excelled in his position at a world-class brewery, he has found his true passion in starting his own restaurant.

“We’re very lucky it’s something we can do and that people are liking it,” he said.

Mrs. Fitzgerald can cook, too, but had never envisioned that she would someday work in the restaurant business.

“My grandma always told me I should have a restaurant,” she remembers, because of her fascination with food and cooking at a young age.

Mrs. Fitzgerald, a graduate of The Ohio State University, worked various positions in the medical field, as an optometry assistant and optician, before pursuing opening a restaurant.

“It was really nothing like this at all,” she said.

Mrs. Fitzgerald selected the restaurant’s décor, which is clean and crisp but also full



The Sleepy Rooster serves its own take on classic breakfast dishes – including its “Chorizo Hash & Eggs” with citrus-herb gremolata – all made from scratch using local ingredients.

of warmth.

“People find it really inviting,” she said.

She had never designed anything before, so she says she “nerded out” with 3D renderings on her tablet.

“It turned out like we wanted,” she said.

After each moved back to the area in 2007, the two former Kenston students met on a blind date arranged by a mutual connection.

They had their first date – and took subsequent wedding pictures – at Jude’s Sports Page Tavern in Bainbridge.

“The Sleepy Rooster” made Yelp’s annual list of Top 100 Restaurants in the U.S. in 2022.

“Fine dining meets brunch at this unique restaurant, which focuses on breakfast specialties served into the afternoon,” according to Yelp. “Everything is made from scratch, including biscuits that would make your grandmother jealous.”

Yelp praises the restaurant’s “The Goetta,” a German breakfast sausage of beef, pork, steel-cut oats, onions, and spices, made in-house and served with eggs and toast.

With something on the menu for everyone, The Sleepy Rooster has become a top spot for brunch in the Valley. ■



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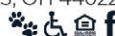
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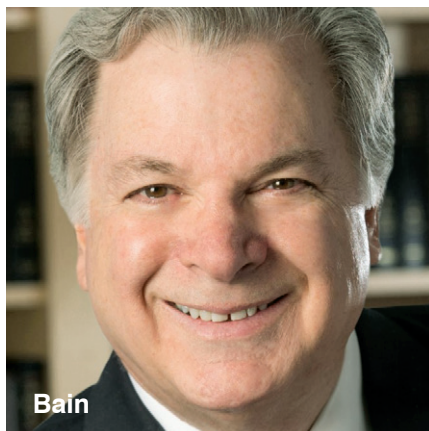
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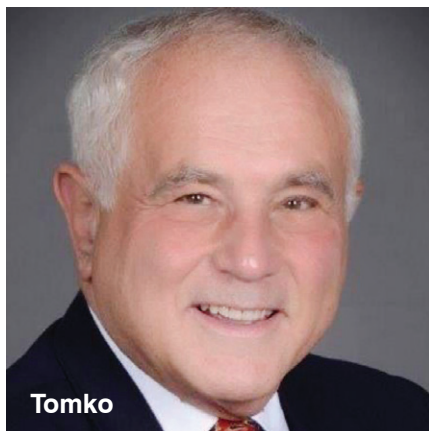
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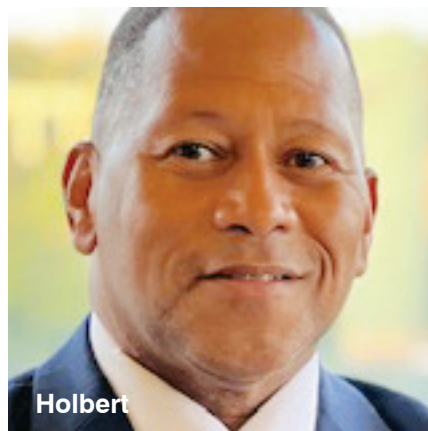
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Bain



Tomko



Holbert

Mayors of three Valley communities share common goals

By SUE REID

Whether it's promoting their local businesses, ensuring fiscal responsibility or communicating with constituents on various issues, local mayors see a growing, full-time role in serving their communities.

Pepper Pike Mayor Richard M. Bain, in his third term in office, said that while the city's charter does not describe the mayor's

role as a full- or part-time position, "the reality of the job is it is essentially a full-time job."

Mr. Bain, a city resident for 32 years and partner in the law firm Meyers Roman Friedberg & Lewis, responds to phone calls and emails from his constituents wherever he is and whatever time of day.

Woodmere Mayor Benjamin Holbert III, in his second term in office, does the same. He said that in order to move his village forward, it takes that kind of time and commitment.

"My job is 24/7," he said.

A former broadcast journalist who worked as a communication specialist for the Cleveland Schools and Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Mr. Holbert said, "Right now my focus is working as mayor."

Chagrin Falls Mayor William Tomko, in his second term in office, also gives a full-time commitment to the village, which has grown and changed during his tenure.

Continued on page 20

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Having spent his career in public accounting, Mr. Tomko moved to Chagrin Falls in 1974 right out of college at Miami University. He serves a village of 4,400 residents which measures 1.6 square miles.

He prefers walking, as opposed to driving, throughout the village, he said, as a way to connect with residents and the business community.

"I try to never drive in the village," Mr. Tomko, 73, said. "You see things on foot you never really see while driving."

Residents are more apt to start a conversation that way, he said, as opposed to picking up the phone and calling.

In his role in Woodmere, Mr. Holbert, 63, is also in regular communication with the village's strong business community. The 300 businesses in this community of 650 residents are located within just one square mile.

"When I got in office, I started working with all our developers," Mr. Holbert said. "I'm trying to be a good steward of this village and work well with our businesses."

In the mainly residential community of Pepper Pike, with 6,400 residents and measuring 7.2 square miles, Mr. Bain, 68, boasts

a robust capital reserve as well as excellent relationships with the city's roughly 50 employees.

"We are here to represent our residents and provide them a good life here in Pepper Pike," Mr. Bain said.

The mayors, who all began as members of their respective councils before taking their community's top offices, continue to set and meet goals throughout their time in office.

"We've restored the confidence of the community in their local government," Mr. Bain said of one of his accomplishments since being elected.

He believes he has achieved a sustainable model for the city in terms of its operations.

"This is really the issue of local government," said Mr. Bain, a native of University Heights. "We have to have sustainable models. We can't deficit-spend. We run a lean ship here in City Hall, but a very efficient operation," he said.

A Solon native, Mr. Tomko is particularly proud of working to put the village's finances in order while in office as well as beginning an organized program of modernizing the infrastructure, including water and sewer lines.

Mr. Tomko has also worked to start and move forward a long-range plan for the

village, which began back in the 1990s. It involved extending sidewalks in the community where they didn't exist before. As of today, most areas of town that can accommodate sidewalks have them, making Chagrin Falls an extremely walkable and pedestrian-friendly community.

As mayor, Mr. Holbert works to beautify his community. Those efforts include large planters along Chagrin Boulevard as well as a variety of plantings around Village Hall.

The addition of sidewalks along Brainard Road also speaks to beautification, he said, and the overall idea of making the village a destination spot.

"Beautification is important to me for this village," Mr. Holbert noted. "I want to create an environment where people are attracted to come here. I want to grow this village."

Mr. Tomko has also worked to enhance the park experience in his village, beginning by creating common, open space areas for everyone in the community to enjoy.

During his time on Village Council and in conjunction with past administrations, such areas as Whitesburg Park were created as was River Run Park on Solon Road.

"We also improved Riverside Park dra-

Continued on page 24

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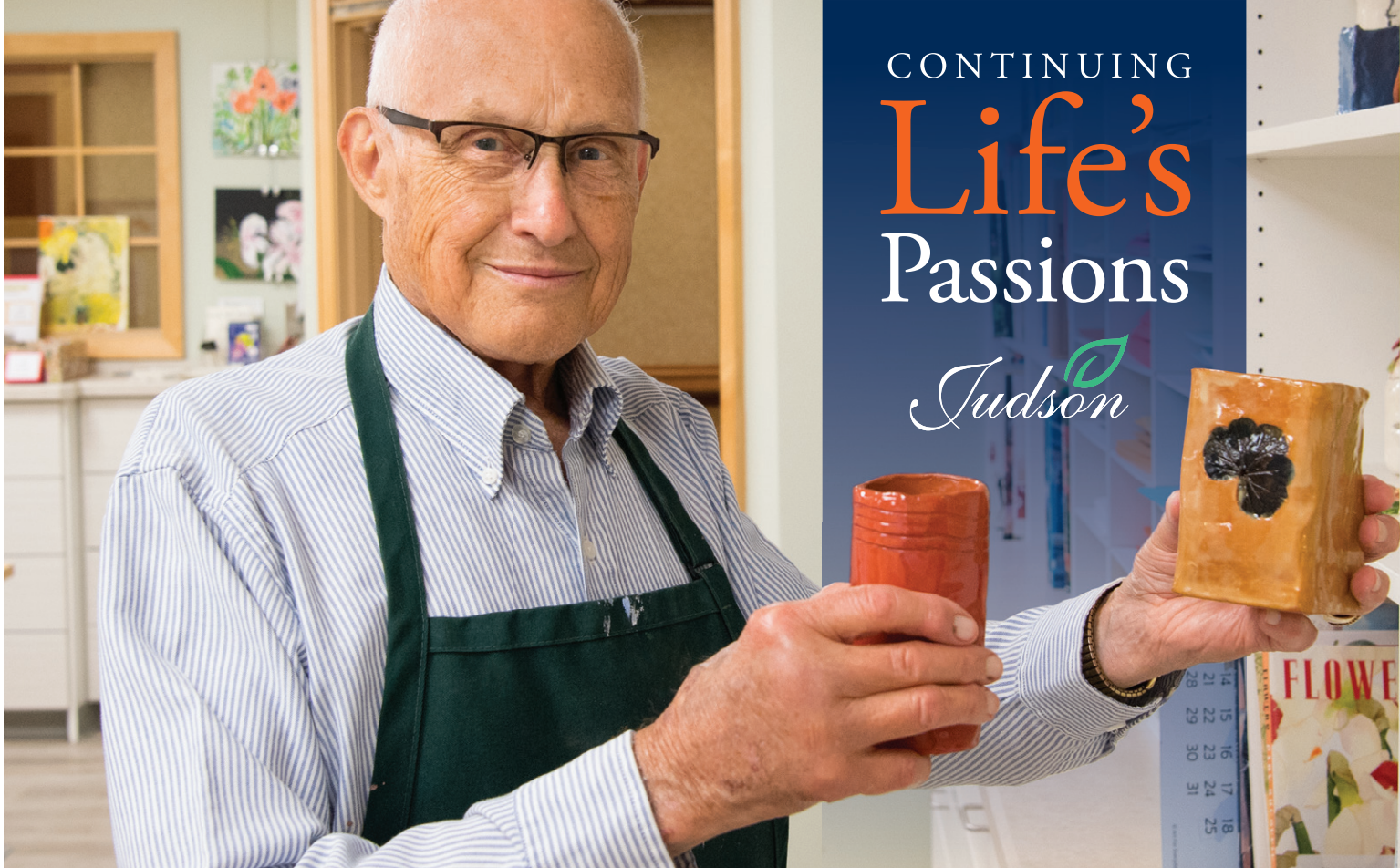
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Continued from page 20

matically,” Mayor Tomko noted. It is home to many annual village events, including the Blossom Time celebration and the Valley Art Center’s Art by the Falls.

Chagrin Falls also entered into an agreement with the Geauga Park District to create Frohring Meadows, which is owned by the village but located in Bainbridge Township. Founder’s Field was created on East Washington Street to provide space for sports teams to practice.

“To me, it’s important to be environmentally responsible,” Mr. Bain said, noting that the city has planted hundreds of trees over the last decade.

And, with a limited commercial district, yet home to several financial services including accounting firms, financial advisers and law firms, Pepper Pike has had a build-up of residential developments dating back to the mid 1950s.

They continue today, Mr. Bain said.

“We have had a very robust residential development the last 15 or 20 years,” he said. The city is modeled by one-acre lots.

As mayor, Mr. Bain works to foster a sense of community through events such as The Taste of Pepper Pike, which draws over 600 people each June. Having outgrown the City Hall property, it now takes place at Ursuline College.

Under his tenure about four years ago, Mr. Tomko helped begin a Merchant Association in an effort to promote and further the commerce of Chagrin Falls.

“I wanted an association that would just promote Chagrin and speak for all of the merchants,” he said.

In addition to their roles within the community, local mayors also are actively involved in a number of organizations, including non-profits.

President and a founder of the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Mr. Tomko is proud of the organization and the work to secure over \$70 million in outside grants as well as over \$2 million in dues since its inception.

“We have worked on many successful projects from Aurora all the way up to Eastlake and Mentor,” he said.

Mr. Holbert sits on the Cuyahoga County

Mayors and Managers Association Executive Board as well as the board of Senior Transportation Connection and B-Buzz baseball league, a youth league with which he has participated since 1972.

Among his involvements, Mr. Bain serves as President and sits on the Executive Board of the Cuyahoga County Mayor and Managers Association; chairs the Suburban Water Regional Council of Governments; co-chairs the Civil Rights Committee, Anti-Defamation League for the Ohio, Kentucky and Western Pennsylvania Region.

He is also a trustee with the Chagrin River Watershed Partners.

Outside of city and village halls, the mayors pursue a variety of hobbies.

Mr. Tomko, a former football standout at Solon High School and Miami University, where he played tackle, enjoys fly fishing, sailing, skiing and hiking, along with his wife, Friday, and the couple’s Standard poodles.

Mr. Bain is also a fly fisherman and avid traveler who grew up sailing. He and his wife, Jean, spend time with their two grown sons’ families including two grandchildren.

Mr. Holbert, who finds joy in the outdoors, is known to cut his lawn three times a week. He loves spending time with family – including wife, Joyce, and three sons – and sports, including baseball, basketball and football.

The mayors, in their roles, continue to set goals for the future.

“One of the things I would like to contribute to and perpetuate is a sense of village,” Mr. Tomko said, “which is very different from being in a suburb.”

The “sense of village” can be cultivated through an increased focus on community involvement and volunteerism within the village, Mr. Tomko said.

“I want to do everything in my power to enhance that, especially among younger and newer residents,” he said. “The Chagrin Falls experience doesn’t just happen. It’s a result of people volunteering and making it happen.”

Mr. Bain said that as younger families continue to be attracted to Pepper Pike, it is important to have outdoor opportunities for people to walk and not be challenged on the city’s major streets.

“Promoting safe pedestrian travel is important,” he said. “My wife used to ride her horse down Lander Road, but things change.”

Mr. Holbert will continue to work to usher in new business – Target recently opened along Chagrin Boulevard – and to embrace future plans to widen the street within village limits.

“I’m trying to make Woodmere village a destination location,” he said, “and do all I can to create an experience here.” ■



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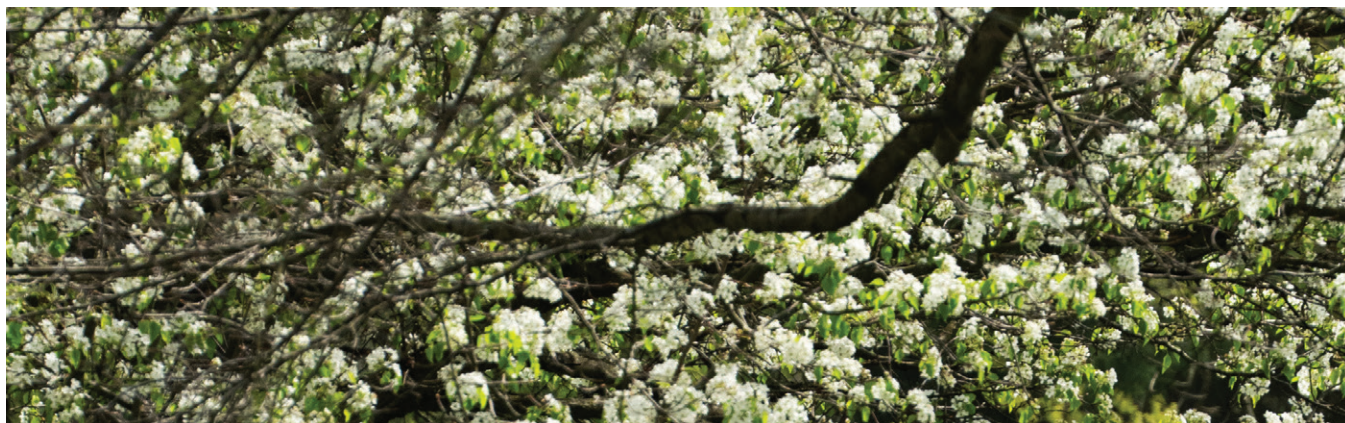
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ON THE COVER: Photographer Michael Steinberg captures the vibrant textures of spring at the Chagrin Valley Hunt Club in Gates Mills.

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Chagrin Valley Rink is always ready to roll

By MICHELE COLLINS

When Chagrin Valley Roller Rink (CVRR) owner Alyson Kindlesparker talks about her “family” of employees, she means it.

As the owner of a roller rink that is open year-round, she counts on her staff members to help keep the rink going, just as she would any member of her family.

The rink has been going since 1947, and its current owner wants to keep the 75-year-old business operating for many more years to come.

Ms. Kindlesparker first came to the roller

rink at 2 years old to learn to skate. She has been skating now for over 50 years, and is an award-winning artistic dance skater as well as teacher.

She said that the rink is her second home, the place her parents met, and where she and her husband literally raised her two children, now 18 and 21. She has owned the rink since 2014, but has worked there since the 1980s.

But another family, the Lesners of Auburn Township, consider CVRR their second home as well. Four family members work or have worked at the rink. Lisa Lesner, along with her daughters Allie, age 20, and Jessie, age 18, and her son, Aaron, age 15, all work there now, although Allie works only when

home from the University of Tulsa.

The youngest Lesner child, 10-year-old Josie, is “in training,” according to her mom. Josie plans to work at the roller rink as soon as she is 15 years old.

“I will start on my 15th birthday,” said the bubbly pre-teen.

Ms. Kindlesparker agrees that Josie is next on her list to hire. She says the Lesner family exudes all the important characteristics of what makes a good employee in the roller rink business.

“The Lesners are truly like family to me,” she shared. “When I met their oldest, Allie, she was so outgoing, and had such a great personality, I asked to hire her. Then when she started working, I asked if there were any more siblings, and not only did I get the second oldest, Jessie, I also got Lisa, their mom.”

Since then, the Lesner family encouraged son, Aaron, who was a little more reluctant, to try his hand at working at the rink. Now he helps with the rink’s very large learn-to-skate classes.

On a recent Wednesday, the Lesners were in skates and literally ready to roll. The learn-to-skate class for grades kindergarten through fifth grade includes over 60 skaters.

The Lesners help the little ones with their skates, they help them when they fall, and they help them learn to love the sport of roller skating.

Mrs. Lesner said one thing her children have learned from working at the rink is that hard work can pay off.

“My son, Aaron, saved up enough money to buy and build a complete gaming station and computer,” said Mrs. Lesner.

“And I saved up enough for my plane ticket to Poland,” added Jessie, who plans to visit Poland this summer to teach conversational English to students before she begins college at the University of Cincinnati this fall.

Josie can’t wait to start working and saving her money as well, following in the footsteps of her role models, her older siblings.

For their mom, coming to the rink also means she gets to stay close with her children.

Mrs. Lesner said she truly enjoys working and skating with her children, especially now that they are teens.

The family spends New Year’s Eve at the rink where Ms. Kindlesparker hosts an all-day skate.

“It wouldn’t be New Years if we weren’t at the rink,” said Mrs. Lesner, whose husband, Thomas, a Solon Police officer, also comes to the rink when he is not working.

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"During the pandemic, we came and skated and sometimes, and it was just us, or like 10 or 12 people," said Mrs. Lesner. "It made us appreciate the former really busy days at the rink. And now, we are all so happy to be back teaching –now that the pandemic is over."

Ms. Kindlesparker said the pandemic "almost killed our business," but thanks to her loyal employees and "a good roofer," she kept the business, and the retro quonset hut-style building that houses the roller rink is under repair.

"We were closed for, like, 12 weeks, just like other businesses, but when we reopened, it took a long time for people to feel comfortable having parties and group events again," she shared.

But one silver lining of the pandemic was that people started to roller skate again. Many took up inline skating outdoors, especially in California, she said. At one point, it was hard to find skates to purchase, because the demand had increased so much.

At CVRR, patrons may rent both inline or traditional roller skates. The rink has over 700 pairs of skates available to rent.

Chagrin Valley Roller Rink also offers adult-only skate times on Wednesday mornings, as well as group lessons for all ages on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Lesson sessions are just six weeks long, so interested skaters

may sign up for lessons all year.

The goal of the Chagrin Valley Roller Rink is to help people stay active and enjoy an activity that is fun year-round and in any weather, said Ms. Kindlesparker.

She is grateful to the many local recreation departments that work with her to offer lessons and camp programs at the roller rink.

"The community has always supported us," said Ms. Kindlesparker. "And I feel like I can give back to those communities as well by offering a family-friendly activity."

A family-friendly activity that is taught and monitored by the family of employees who make Chagrin Valley Roller Rink feel like a second home. ■

The Lesner family, back row left to right, Jessie, Lisa, and Aaron and in front, Josie. Four of the Lesner family members have worked at Chagrin Valley Roller Rink, and 10-year-old Josie can't wait to begin working when she turns 15.



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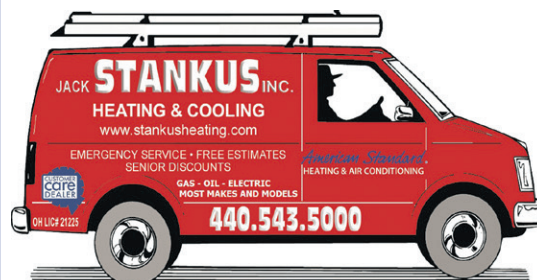
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Skating instructor Heather Luchin, of Solon, instructs her daughter Ariana, age 8, in the spin harness during a figure skating practice session at The Pond in Chagrin Falls.

The Pond: not just an ice rink any more

By MICHELE COLLINS

The Pond, the ice skating rink at 9999 E. Washington Street in Chagrin Falls, is not just an ice rink anymore.

Owner Elisa Nash has transformed the space into a destination for family fun. Hosting everything from indoor and outdoor soccer, lacrosse and baseball, to offering a place to practice hockey shots, hit a baseball and practice skating before getting on the ice, The Pond has non-stop action both inside and out.

A newly added synthetic ice area is excellent for teaching the youngest skaters, according to Ms. Nash.

“By starting them on the smaller synthetic ice surface, they are not overwhelmed by the size of the ice rink, they are not cold, and it is a great way for them to gain confidence before going out on the rink,” she said.

That same surface doubles as a practice area for young hockey players.

The full-size ice arena still offers ice time seven days a week, with everything from tot hockey up to adult hockey, and all levels of learn-to-skate classes as well as private lessons for advanced figure skaters.



Coach Matt Kolan of Soccer Shots collects soccer balls from the pre-schoolers who participate in the soccer program held on The Pond’s indoor turf field.

Public skating sessions are held every day.

But now, The Pond also appeals to those who don’t skate, said Ms. Nash.

“Our upstairs ‘yard’ offers a great place

to have a party,” she said. “It is an open area where people can hold a soccer party, or a kickball party or even a Nerf gun party.”

She said the space includes a sit-down



area to enjoy food and a cake.

Outside, the Pond has added Big Blue, a full-size turf field. This field may be rented by teams that want an additional practice field, or need more convenient practice time slots than they can get in their local recreation leagues.

Even high schools have rented Big Blue to hold early season practices, or to practice indoors when grass fields are too wet.

"One thing we have learned about the ice rink business is that it is a business with a

lot of overhead to keep the rink running," explained Ms. Nash, "so by adding opportunities for other activities within the same space, we are helping our bottom line."

The Nash family purchased the business about 11 years ago. The family's sons worked at the rink originally, but now have what Ms. Nash called "big boy jobs."

"They are available on an as-needed basis, however," their mom laughed.

The family has made the indoor and turf field updates over the last couple of years. But the

Nashes are not finished with the renovations.

"Phase two includes building a restaurant that is glass-enclosed that faces the rink. This will allow families to enjoy a meal, or a cup of coffee, while watching hockey games on the ice," Ms. Nash said.

She said everyone at the rink is excited about the prospect of a seating area that will allow patrons to view the ice.

"I know Grandmas and Grandpas will love it. Staying warm while watching the game or ice show," she said.

As the winter ends, one would think an ice rink might have a bit of a slow-down in activity. But at The Pond, summer means summer camps, when the rink is offering a full slate of hockey and skating camps.

The Pond summer camps include use of its hockey shot training area, and offer outdoor fun on the turf field for the campers. A full arcade is available for play before and after camps, or any other time kids visit.

Its all-activities-in-one location means kids from surrounding counties come out to enjoy the many amenities offered at The Pond.

It is also why so many kids tell their parents to "just take me to The Pond" when asked what they want to do that day, Ms. Nash says.

This something-for-everyone offering is probably one of the reasons why the Nashes chose the name for the rink's new, improved website: ilovethepond.com. ■

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Chris Crimaldi, pictured in his Glass Asylum on West Orange Street, also termed the “hot shop” has expanded and grown his business over the past decade. His custom glass designs are found locally and around the world.

Glassmith Chris Crimaldi molds, expands vision

By SUE REID

With two employees and a goal to share glass and art with the public, Chris Crimaldi began his Glass Asylum a decade ago and has been growing exponentially ever since due to a culture rooted in creativity and in mentoring others.

Glass blower Amanda Takacs, now 25, was a student at Orange High School when she decided to do her senior project at Mr. Crimaldi's West Orange Street studio. She knew she wanted to pursue some type of art-related field at that time, but was not sure what area of focus.

"I ended up majoring in glass," said Ms. Takacs, who went on to earn her degree at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Thanks to the mentoring by Mr. Crimaldi, and with a growing fascination of the versatility of glass, Ms. Takacs is among the shop's 14 employees, who function as a family unit.

Mr. Crimaldi, Glass Asylum owner and founder, said his original goal from as far back as the studio's roots in 2013 was to create a place that was not only interactive, but a space that would provide an avenue for glass artists to discover their paths – and to make a living doing it.

To that end, many have had their first opportunity to blow glass at his studio.

"Chris mentors people who are trying to find a path in life and who have never blown glass before," Jodie Jacobson, operations manager for Glass Asylum, said. "He has turned many of them into successful glass artists."

Mr. Crimaldi's own path to the craft that has earned him both national and international attention began as a hobby for the Lyndhurst resident and electrician.

"I fell in love with it," Mr. Crimaldi, a 1991 graduate of Solon High School, said.

In 2010, he purchased the studio where he

learned his craft before starting Glass Asylum in 2013 and moving to the village alongside M Italian.

There in the studio – also termed the “hot shop” – he draws customers locally and from all over the country.

While he still remains fascinated by the craft of glass blowing, Mr. Crimaldi is immersed in the business aspect of Glass Asylum.

In September, he plans to add a showroom in Bainbridge Township as well as a new venture, Chris Crimaldi Designs, as the overarching brand.

Mr. Crimaldi acknowledges that growing the business is a “big step.”

“The growth this year and what we will attempt is a big step and a good step for the future,” he added. “Hopefully it gives us more of an outlet and establishes us even further.”

His new private and innovative space slated to open on Chagrin Road, just steps from Cha-

grin Falls, will be home to everything from classes and events to an overflow glass workshop and studio.

As part of the growth linked to his 10-year anniversary in business, Chris Crimaldi Designs will take over the family electrical business, Crimaldi & Son, Inc., he has with his father, Gary.

“We will be creating an event space here,” Mr. Crimaldi, 50, said, describing it as a venue for public and private events. Its lighting showroom carries many of his own designs.

Those designs are commissioned locally and around the world. He has shipped his wall sconces to Ireland and pendant lights to the Virgin Islands, and created one-of-a-kind installations, most recently at the Cleveland Botanical Gardens.

Locally throughout the Chagrin Valley, his glass is prominent in all of the Burntwood taverns, M Italian, in Cork and Bottle in Mayfield, as well as other restaurants, hotels and event centers.

“I’m still fascinated by the craft,” Mr. Crimaldi said, despite the demands on his time. “There are so many avenues to explore in glass. We have only touched very little of what we can actually do with glass from our standpoint.”

Mr. Crimaldi prides himself in the array of creations his studio can deliver. He is able to meet just about any request.

“We let the clientele determine a lot of it,” Mr. Crimaldi said. “When someone once requested a turtle, we figured out how to make a turtle.”

Syrup for a 12-foot waffle? The studio did that, too.

Mr. Crimaldi’s glass creations also play a part in Chagrin Falls’ traditions, including ducks for the Chamber of Commerce’s annual duck race, and custom Oscars and popcorn for other events, including the Chagrin Documentary Film Fest.

When it comes to glass-blowing, he said the process is “probably the best part.”

The process involves the challenge of getting there, the trouble shooting through it,



A dedicated staff at Glass Asylum collaborates and creates on a regular basis, bringing ideas to life within the West Orange Street “hot shop.” Some members include (from left) Dominic Bender, founder Chris Grimaldi with his dogs Milo and Millie, Dean Wherenberg and Jodie Jacobson.

hand-eye coordination and improvisation.

“There are basic steps, then you improvise within those steps,” Mr. Crimaldi explained.

There’s also an immediacy to glass blowing, and a skill, Mr. Crimaldi added.

“This is a really hard art form and not something you can do at home in your basement,” he said.

In the Chagrin Falls studio, glass blowing is taught through a variety of programming, with many area school students and groups taking part along with visitors from around the country.

“We try to make the experience as interactive as possible,” Mr. Crimaldi said. “You want to give them an appreciation of the art, as well as tell them about Chagrin Falls, too, and what a great town it is. I want to make sure they have a really great, fun experience and learn a little bit.”

He also wants them to walk away with something unique that they made on their own.

“We have made 7,000 cups, but very few

look exactly alike,” he noted.

Mr. Crimaldi’s ongoing goal is to have a business model that works the best and a staff that grows with him.

His dedicated staff enjoys sitting together, planning out all the requests and commissions that come his way.

“We have grown so much,” Mr. Crimaldi said.

“We all grow together,” Ms. Jacobson added. “It’s been a grow-together thing.”

Mr. Crimaldi credits this staff -- “the best staff around,” he said -- for the growth of his business.

“I have been in the right place at the right time, made the right decisions and been surrounded by good people,” he said.

A true visionary, he also admits that Glass Asylum’s path was unexpected.

“I thought I was going to have a place to make some lights, keep being an electrician and make some cool art,” Mr. Crimaldi said.

“I am blessed, and I’m always having fun.” ■



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Brothers Mike and Jack Arra, along with a dedicated staff, are constantly evolving when it comes to the services they provide. The business on Bell Street is the longest operating beauty salon in the village.

A family hair affair

Arra Hair Salon celebrates 53 years

By SUE REID

In nearly 4,500 square feet on Bell Street, near the corner of Philomethian Street, a village institution rooted in family — and in beauty — finds its home.

It was in 1970 that the late Michael Arra, along with his brother Jack, would open Arra Hair Salon in the village, following an uncommon path for men in that day, sons of the same names — Mike and Jack — explained.

“Male hairdressers were few and far between,” Mike, 65, and of Russell, said.

The late Mr. Arra had initially opened the

shop outside of the village in 1968, at Mayfield and Brainard roads, prior to moving it to Chagrin Falls two years later, making it the longest continually operating hair salon in town at 53 years. Only the former Mario’s salon was open a year before.

“When we started, roller sets were mostly all they did,” Mike recalled. Women eventually came into the salon weekly for blow dries, something his father’s shop was ahead of the times.

“A haircut was more important than the style at that time,” Mike continued.

Mike and Jack, who grew up in Maple Heights before moving with their family to Coy Lane in Chagrin Falls and graduating from West Geauga High School, watched their teachers come into the salon, as well as generations of men and women.

“It was always so great to see everyone,” Jack, 56, said.

Despite time spent in the salon, the brothers didn’t see themselves following in their father’s footsteps at first. Mike was initially interested in cabinet-making and Jack was considering a career as a chef.

“My father told me that, before I went off to college at 18, he was going to send me to beauty school,” Mike recalled, “and then I would be ready for work.”

Jack said with a laugh that he quickly came to realize as he started to pursue restaurant jobs that he had the choice to work with beautiful women or a dishwasher. He also wished to emulate his older brother, he added, who became a partner in the business following beauty school.

At that time, their father had two salons,

one at Eastgate and the Chagrin Falls location. In 1984, he added a third location at the Great Northern Mall.

There were other locations, including in Hudson, but coming together in the business, Mike and Jack realized they didn't want to spread themselves too thin with over 100 employees across three salons. They eventually merged the Mayfield location into Chagrin in 2000 upon their parents' retirement.

"Mike and I evolved it into what it is today," Jack said, "and started to think about what is our next move."

When their father purchased the business, it was one-quarter of the size it is now, with the brothers expanding it in 2000.

The Arra brothers would continue to not only grow the business but create a culture, always sticking to lessons instilled in them by their father, who died in 2020 at the age of 85.

"The customer is always right," Jack said of one of the lessons.

It was also important to always serve the clients' particular needs when it comes to their hair, he said.

"We try to stay educated on what is going on and try to be ahead of it," Mike continued. "There's a lot of salons and lots of hairdressers" so they need to stand apart.

"You have to always do what (other salons) are not doing," Mike said.

The Arras pride themselves on being a family business. Mike's wife, Diana, is one of the hairstylists among the 31 employees. She interviewed for the job with the late Mr. Arra and started at the salon in 1978. Mike's daughter, Michelle Arra, also does hair there.

"We build a culture here," Jack said, "that is always revolved around a family atmosphere."

The brothers give their stylists the support and tools they need to be successful, they noted.

"Most hairstylists are no longer doing hair two years after they graduate from beauty school," Jack said, "and we are not comfortable with that number."

The brothers offer support to their staff to grow in their careers and make a comfortable living, they said.

Both Mike and Jack are also still behind the chair themselves.

"The speed of the leaders determine the pace of the pack," Jack said. "We are behind the chair and in the same trenches. We don't walk in and then leave."

"I still love doing hair," added Mike, a father of two and grandfather of three, whose transformations he makes in people's lives provides continued satisfaction.

"It's one of the only things in life that is instant gratification," Jack added. "By the time they leave, their whole personality changes."

The salon features a full spa that offers micro-blading, non-surgical face lifts, permanent make up, facials and generations of clients.

"I did their first haircut and now I'm cutting their kids' hair," Jack said.

The brothers also pride themselves on the longevity of their employees.

"We have probably given out eight 20-year watches," Mike said, a tradition at the salons' annual Christmas party at the Hillbrook Club.

Arra Hair Salon and Spa has also hosted pre-pandemic an annual Blossom Time party in their parking lot, and puts on a clam bake each year with the team, which gets together

regularly outside of work.

"Most of our team does day-to-day stuff with each other," Mike said. "It's pretty cool to watch someone start here and become part of our team."

"We don't have a lot of egos here," Jack added. "A family becomes a family."

The atmosphere they created is one their father was proud of, the brothers said.

"He was very proud," Mike said. "When he retired, he would come in once a week and have a cup of coffee with everybody."

The salon, which specializes in color and corrective color and features a boutique with clothing and jewelry, also does some of the best hair extensions out there, Jack, a father of three, said proudly.

"We address all the needs of the client and their challenges, and come up with solutions," Jack said.

Their success is word-of-mouth and due in large part to the relationships they have formed along the way.

"We know everybody by name," Jack said.

"I can honestly say our team makes us who we are here," Mike added.

"We are a 53-year-old salon that has always evolved," Jack said, "and are not the ma-and-pa salon anymore. We keep recreating ourselves."

The brothers say they have no regrets of the path they chose and remain as close as they always have been.

"He bothered me when I was 9 and when I was probably 17," Mike said with a laugh. "We live a mile from each other and are best friends."

"I still look forward to going to work each day," Jack added. "We love doing hair now as much as we did at the start." ■



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AUBURN TOWNSHIP

Year established: 1817

Population: 6,518

Size: 25 square miles

Simple pleasures provide the attractions of the rural and bucolic settings of scenic Auburn Township.

LaDue Reservoir with its shimmering waters is a central attraction and asset in Auburn. The reservoir provides water for the city of Akron, but it's a recreation magnet for anglers, boaters and those who enjoy the outdoors.

Auburn Marsh, 462 state-owned acres along Auburn Road, is a favorite site for hunting.

Beyond the waters and marshes, farms dot the landscape, with new home communities on large lots sprouting around them. Auburn has been the fastest-growing township in Geauga County for several years, yet it retains its country appeal. Farmers still engage in dairy, organic and other types of farming.

One of the older communities within the township is Taborville. It was established in the 1920s as a DTJ summer community by a Czech group from Cleveland for gymnastic training and exhibitions. DTJ, is a translation of "Workers Gymnastics Union." DTJs were

international organizations, part of the Labor Movement, dedicated to youth training. They were founded in Prague in 1897.

At the southwest corner of the township is the Geauga Park District's Beartown Lakes Reservation. The park encompasses land in Auburn and Bainbridge townships and features walking trails, a lake for fishing and a picnic pavilion.

The first house in the township was built in 1815 by Bildad Bradley, who came from Massachusetts with other pioneers to brave the wilderness in the southwest corner of Geauga County.

Many people are unaware that the Leader tractor was developed in the 1940s by township residents Lewis Brockway and son Walter. They later developed the Brockway tractor.

Through the years, Auburn has developed a busy industrial area on Munn Road. The Route 422 interchange at Ravenna Road (Route 44) provides immediate access to places west and east.

BAINBRIDGE

Year established: 1817

Population: 11,482

Size: 25 square miles

Diversity characterizes this bustling township in Geauga County. From farms to

shopping centers and friendly neighborhoods, the township offers something for everyone.

Its rich heritage and culture shines through in the township's Heritage Park at the town center on Chillicothe Road (Route 306).

Welcome signs at the main entrances to the township display the township flower, the tuberous begonia. It was brought here by Carlton Lowe from Belgium when he was a World War I soldier.

Mr. Lowe was fascinated by the fields of begonias he saw in Belgium, so the farmer sent him some seeds which he cultivated. Because of his efforts, the tuberous begonia is grown throughout the country. His legacy is Lowe's Greenhouse.

The township's first pioneer family and residents, the McConougheys, arrived in 1811. The township had a population of 72 when it was established in 1817.

There is no lack of activities to do in the township. Golfers visit Tanglewood Golf Course and the Golf Dome, where everyone can practice their swings. Chagrin Valley Athletic Club and the Wembley Club provide tennis and swimming.

Those who enjoy the outdoors can hike, jog and watch nature at the Geauga Park District's Frohning Meadows and at Bear Town Lake, also in Auburn Township, as well as Centerville Mills Park, where a waterfall is a main attraction.

The township's busy commercial areas are centered at East Washington Street and Chillicothe Road (Route 306), at the Route 422 interchange, and at a shopping center on Aurora Road (Route 43).

BENTLEYVILLE

Year established: 1829

Population: 886

Size: 2.6 square miles

This green and rolling hamlet is known throughout the region for its collection of distinctive homes and verdant neighborhoods.

Bentleyville is governed by a mayor and a six-person council and operates its own police and service departments. A dedicated resident volunteer base sees to a variety of beautification projects, including management of a village park at Liberty and Solon roads, seasonal planting and holiday decorating.

The modern, yet classically designed, village hall at River and Solon roads mirrors the town's single church, St. Martin's Episcopal, across the street. This highly desirable residential community has no commercial development.

Bentleyville also contains a large portion of the Cleveland Metroparks South Chagrin Reservation, which draws visitors to the village on a daily basis.

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offers hikers, cyclists and cross-country skiers some of the best trails around. Bentleyville's parks within the reservation offer views of magnificent bluffs, streams, slate riverbeds and include a fitness trail and an arboretum.

The reservation's famous, vintage stone shelter-house is a prime picnic area. The rustic Look About Lodge, nestled in the woods, is used for gatherings of all kinds.

The area is within an easy drive or stroll of the village's two main thoroughfares, Solon and Miles roads.

Perhaps most distinctive among Bentleyville's scenic beauties is Squaw Rock. Its main feature, from which the area gets its name, is a large stone relief sculpture carved into the side of a cliff. The scene is said to depict the demise of the Native American. Its creator was blacksmith and artist Henry Church Jr., one of the area's earliest pioneers.

CHAGRIN FALLS

Year established: 1844

Population: 4,129

Size: 2.1 square miles

A river runs through it and the waterfall in the center of its old-time downtown make historic Chagrin Falls a destination for sightseers, those looking for an all-inclusive day trip, perhaps an extended visit or a safe place to raise a family.

The village of just more than 4,000, however, doesn't live by its physical beauty alone, nor by its manicured parks and pocket vista

overlooking the river that takes its name of the "high falls" as historians refer to the town's natural wonder. Chagrin Falls lives by what it offers its visitors and the people who live there.

The village offers some of the finest dining and shopping in the region. With just a few exceptions, the businesses that thrive in the village are owner-operated. Residents stay and visitors return again and again to this community due to its one-of-a-kind shops filled with unique merchandise and choice of dining experiences.

Anyone can experience a variety of cultural events year-round, including visiting Chautauqua Institution programs during summer months, concerts in the park, art galleries, an open-air art festival and live theater, dance and musical events staged throughout the year.

Early spring brings the annual Blossom Time Festival to downtown. The four-day event features all the classic carnival experiences: food, music, entertainment, games for the kids, a walk and run for all ages and a parade.

Summer Sundays are farmers' market days downtown. In early October, the village is the epicenter of the award-winning Chagrin Documentary Film Festival. During winter months and the holidays, the town is alive with a lighting display that turns the village into a warm and inviting wonderland. The town is also home to the well-known Chagrin Valley Little Theatre, in existence since 1930 and one of the oldest community theaters in the U.S.

Chagrin Falls is what some call the home town in which they wished they had grown

up. Beyond its downtown and full schedule of year-round culture, fun and activities are tree-lined, close-knit neighborhoods highlighted by well-maintained historic homes dating to the town's beginnings.

In Chagrin Falls, the past and the present co-exist comfortably. The history of Chagrin Falls is archived by the Chagrin Falls Historical Society museum. Volunteer historians also offer programming on subjects of historic interest for children and adults. The historical society publishes a series of local interest books.

Chagrin Falls Village operates police, fire, water, streets, service and water departments, which are overseen by a mayor and seven council members. Because the village is located within Chagrin Falls Township, village residents also have a three-trustee board representing them.

Trustees also maintain the historic Town Hall on North Main Street, a public space leased for classes, meetings and private parties.

Chagrin Falls School District serves the village and several surrounding communities with a K-12 program. The district is consistently rated at the top of premiere schools nationally.

GATES MILLS

Year established: 1920

Population: 2,248

Size: 9.1 square miles

An enclave of tranquility and natural beauty, the village is designated as a

Continued on page 38

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Continued from page 35

bird sanctuary. With the meandering Chagrin River running through the village and its downtown area -- steeped in history and traditional Greek Revival architecture -- Gates Mills is reminiscent of a New England town.

Rolling acres, forest and scenic vistas are prime attractions in this quiet Western Reserve hamlet which remarkably has easy ac-

cess to Interstate 271.

Visitors who are in the know don't need to drive to New England to enjoy the gorgeous fall foliage, which is most beguiling from the walking bridge that stretches across the river. There's a small downtown with a charming library, a post office, a restaurant and retail shops.

Wander the trails in the picturesque arboretum located on the banks of the river, a project planned

and maintained by the active village garden club.

The historic Chagrin Valley Hunt Club polo field harkens back to an age of tradition and grace. In the mornings, the well-behaved foxhounds that stay in a pack take their morning walk on the quaint streets of the village.

The old Livery Tavern, which at one time was a stable and a feed store, became a grocery, a tavern and a sundries store. Today, it houses small businesses and offices.

Civic engagement is at the heart of this community with a plethora of community organizations, including the award-winning garden club, the community club -- a ladies' volunteer group that has published the village's "Pink Sheet" since 1947 -- the improvement society, the land conservancy organization and the Gates Mills Players community theater group, to name a few.

HUNTING VALLEY

Year established: 1924

Population: 766

Size: 8 square miles

egendary aviator Charles Lindbergh landed his plane at David Ingall's landing strip back in the 1920s in the heart of this village of grand country estates and horse farms. Rolling hills, rich forest land, fields of wildflowers, wetlands and river gorges remain in this unspoiled, peaceful haven.

In the deep of the Chagrin River Valley, the village has been home to some of Cleveland's most prominent families who developed picturesque estates that remain whole today. Partnering with nonprofit organizations, and using its resources, Hunting Valley has seen to it that this pristine area remains preserved.

As an example of its commitment, Hunting Valley partnered with private investors and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy to preserve hundreds of acres where, in the golden age, the former stables at Halfred Farms featured a polo field, an arena, 40 stalls, a dairy, a greenhouse, a kennel housing Norwegian wolf hounds and a racetrack. Through the partnership, an equestrian center, White North Stables, was born.

Part of the award-winning Orange School District, the village is home to University School, a private college-preparatory boys school that has received numerous accolades.

French fur traders discovered the area in the late 17th century. Through the years, Hunting Valley has maintained its natural beauty in its efforts to preserve the past.

MORELAND HILLS

Year established: 1929

Population: 3,425

Size: 7.23 square miles

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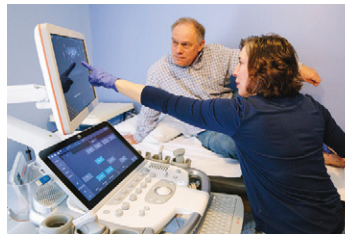
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Preserve is the 135-acre home to more than 150 species of plants and 68 species of birds, as well as upwards of five miles of hiking trails.

Spectacular views from contemporary and traditional homes perched on hills reveal the Chagrin River, deep ravines, streams, lush woods and marshland.

Just a stone's throw away from this quiet and serene community with two-plus-acre residential lots is a bustling corner of exceptional high-end shops and restaurants.

Moreland Hills is part of the award-winning Orange School District.

The village is the birthplace of President James A. Garfield. A memorial cabin commemorating his birth in 1880 on the village hall campus draws visitors interested in American history.

Hiram House Camp, the oldest camp in Ohio and one of the earliest camps in the country, is on 172 pristine acres and offers year-round camps and activities.

In 2012, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy embarked on a partnership with the village to preserve Forest Ridge Preserve on Chagrin River Road and built its dazzling headquarters next to the park. The organization worked to restore and recycle a 5,000-square-foot century home and built an 11,000-square-foot environmentally responsible addition.

Chagrin Valley Country Club, with a lush golf course and Western Reserve architecture, is another jewel in the village's crown.

NEWBURY TOWNSHIP

Year established: 1817

Population: 5,568

Size: 25 square miles

Driving down Newbury's central corridor of Kinsman Road (Route 87), many people might be surprised by the diverse and vibrant light-industrial development in the township. It is testimony to the township's brisk economic activities and attraction to businesses, including landscaping and construction offerings.

Newbury's commercial center, known as Newbury Center, is at Auburn and Kinsman (Route 87) roads, with Newbury School District and the town hall nearby. St. Helen School also is in the township.

Close to the center is the township's 88-acre Oberland Park, which features hiking trails for those who like to get outdoors.

The township's first permanent settler was thought to be Lemuel Punderson in 1810. By 1817, there were 27 taxpayers living in Newbury, which also had a South and North Newbury.

One of its historic places is Union Chapel, built in 1856 and dedicated to free speech by President James A. Garfield. It served as a community center and was used for many purposes over the years.

Continued on page 40



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Continued from page 39

The two main state arteries (the second is Ravenna Road or Route 44) provide easy access to points north, south, east and west. Popular restaurants are readily available to complement the Sharon James Cellars winery at 11303 Kinsman with a wine-tasting room, an outdoor patio and a wine bar.

A prominent addition to the township is the Habitat for Humanity of Geauga County's ReStore, which offers used items for sale.

The township has a rural charm, as well. Scenery features farms, including horse and dairy operations, and meadows and woodlands.

Those looking for some adventure and a getaway may stop in at Punderson State Park, 11755 Kinsman, and enjoy hiking, golfing, swimming, boating, fishing and picnicking. One of the area's best sledding hills awaits winter snow.

The state park's campground is open year-round. The English Tudor-style Punderson Manor Lodge and Conference Center offers golf, dining and overnight accommodations in the lodge or cabins. The township is also home to Camp Ho Mita Koda, a summer camp for diabetic children, started in 1930.

ORANGE

Year established: 1929

Population: 3,428

Size: 3.82 square miles

Referred to as a "community for all generations," Orange village offers a variety of housing options, active parks and bustling shopping areas.

Families with children enjoy the community park, which features a gazebo for evening concerts, playing fields, trails, a playground, sand volleyball and a putting green.

Several hotels, restaurants and other businesses, as well as Beechmont Country Club, are in the village business district. Pinecrest, a mixed-use development, is off the Harvard Road exit off Interstate 271.

Originally part of Orange Township, the area was settled in 1815 and included Hunting Valley, Moreland Hills, Pepper Pike and Woodmere. All five communities are part of the award-winning Orange School District, which has an active community and recreational department and senior center.

The village is home to several churches as well as Temple Emanu El.

The name "Orange" was chosen because some of the early settlers had come from Orange, Conn. Established as a township in 1820 with a strong agricultural base, the area later was divided into five communities when prominent Clevelanders Otis P. and Mantis J. Van Sweringen wanted to develop farmland east of Cleveland to the Chagrin River. Due to a population boom, a desire for separate governmental representation led to the creation of various communities.

PEPPER PIKE

Year established: 1924

Population: 6,830

Size: 7.5 square miles

Touted as "close to everything," Pepper Pike has easy access to Interstate 271 and at the same time, exudes a sense of country living.

A progressive city, where nearly two-thirds of the residents recycle, Pepper Pike is one of the greenest places in greater Cleveland. It has been recognized by the National Arbor Foundation for its commitment to planting and preserving trees.

Boasting a city park, manicured lawns, upscale shopping and two country clubs, Pepper Pike Club and The Country Club, residents enjoy a variety of amenities.

Home to the top-ranked Orange School District, the city also boasts several private schools, a senior center, churches and Park Synagogue, one of the country's largest conservative Jewish congregations.

From traditional to modern, Pepper Pike is a blend of housing styles on one-plus-acre lots.

This close-knit community boasts a community band, an annual ice-cream social and health and wellness events. The Pepper Pike Civic League, founded in 1957, serves as an advocate for good government.

The city has a strong Municipal Emergency Response Corps, comprised of safety officers and residents. The popular citizen's police academy was designed to educate residents on safety issues.

Landerwood Plaza is a place where neighbors congregate. Built in 1960, the shopping district boasts Heinen's, a family-owned Cleveland grocery chain, as well as a toy shop, a hardware store, upscale clothing stores, jewelry, salons, offices and more.

RUSSELL

Year established: 1827

Population: 5,215

Size: 19.2 square miles

While known by many as Russell Township, some also know it as Novelty, the name of its post office.

A first impression of Russell is one of open spaces and woodlands, interspersed with residential communities on spacious lots.

That is just how residents like it. They have historically fought for, defended and supported its large-lot zoning and rural character. Commercial activities are kept to a minimum by design.

Sitting at the official town center at Kinsman (Route 87) and Chillicothe (Route 306) roads is its historic town hall. Nearby, are the modern police and fire departments where the old Russell School once stood.

Perhaps the most well-known landmark in Russell is the headquarters of ASM International, formerly the Society for Metals. Its giant geodesic dome is set in rolling hills and



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surrounded by trees.

Another much-visited site is the Club at Hillbrook that was developed by the late Edmund S. Burke as a 40-room Tudor mansion. It's surrounded by homes in Hillbrook Estates.

Fairmount Center for the Arts is a popular gathering place for those fascinated by the arts and dance.

Adventure awaits those who visit the Geauga Park District's West Woods. The popular attraction features spectacular scenery, a nature center and trails that lead to Ansel's Caves, featuring stunning rock outcroppings.

The first settlers in the area were Gideon Russell and his family in 1818. The Telling Belle Vernon farm operated for many years, providing milk to the greater Cleveland area. A few of its structures remain.

While most students attend West Geauga School District, a small portion of the township is in the Chagrin Falls School District. Laurel School, a private school for girls, has its Butler Campus on Fairmount Road.

SOUTH RUSSELL

Year established: 1923

Population: 3,972

Size: 5 square miles

Described as a great place to live and raise a family, the village is a jewel in the Chagrin Valley.

Focus of activities is South Russell Village Park, site of the annual fall festival.

Nestled between Russell and Bainbridge

townships, South Russell was originally the southern portion of Russell Township.

In the 1900s, when each community had its own school, school centralization was discussed and bitterly disputed, according to historians Pand and Phillip Wayne Hosmer.

This led South Russell Village, incorporated in 1923, to break away from the township. The village was granted its request to become a part of the centralized Chagrin Falls School District, allowing South Russell students to start attending the Chagrin Falls schools in 1926. Gurney School was built in the village in 1966 on Bell Road.

The South Russell Cemetery on Bell Road was the first in the area, starting with a half-acre purchased in 1849 and enlarged in 1863.

The village center at Bell and Chilli-cothe (Route 306) roads once was known as Soule's Corners, named after three brothers who settled Russell in 1839.

The village park on Bell Road is a center of recreation for walking, nature observation and picnics. The interurban rail line once ran through the village as the route to Hiram and Garrettsville went through what are now the park and former Muggleton Farm. Remains of the line are visible at the park.

Commercial and some industrial development are on East Washington Street. The Cleveland Clinic's Chagrin Falls Family Medical Center is one of the larger presences on that strip of roadway.

During the summer, the Geauga Fresh

Famer's Market, located in the Village Hall parking lot, is a major attraction to visitors.

WOODMERE

Year established: 1944

Population: 635

Size: 0.33 square miles

Luxury shopping and dining are the hallmarks of Woodmere, the "Gateway to the Chagrin Valley." Just a stone's throw away from the bustling Chagrin Boulevard are side streets lined with trees, single-family houses and apartment complexes that are home to a diverse cross-section of residents.

Along with more than 300 businesses in the village, there is easy access to Interstate 271 and a short ride to downtown Cleveland.

Eton Chagrin Boulevard, a village-like plaza of high-end restaurants and shops, is a perfect place to watch people. Beautifully landscaped, the gardens in the spring and summer are stunning. Visitors often take respite in one of the many comfortable seating areas.

Part of the top-rated Orange School District, Woodmere village is home to residents who share a keen sense of community, with generations of families maintaining their roots there.

Woodmere originally was part of Orange Township, along with Moreland Hills, Orange and Pepper Pike.

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